

The Glorious Unknown

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Summary: Matilda Knowles doesn't have the greatest life at the moment, but that changes ((kinda)) when she meets the newsies.

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>

>Mathilda Knowles ran through the streets of Manhattan. She was running for her life, but the predator was gaining on her. She rounded a corner as he grabbed her arm, and pulled her back into the dark ally. He throw her into the hard brick wall.

>"I told you I'd find you. Now, I can finish what I was going to start" he said to her.

>"I'm not afraid of you, Macalister!" Mathilda shouted. On her exterior, she was undaunted, but inside, she was scared to death.

>"Stop your acting, Mathilda. I can still tell you're just a scared little girl without your daddy to protect you. I promised you I'd kill you one day. I guess todays the day."

>He advanced on her, and she slugged him in the jaw hard snapping his head to the side. But, it didn't faze him. He was unstoppable. Ready to kill. He gripped her arms tight as she struggled to escape. When he was fixing to strike her when a police officer showed up from hearing all the shouting.

>"Hey! What's going on here?" he yelled walking up to the dark ally. Macalister pushed Mathilda to the ground, and ran off. The officer ran up to her, and helped her up. "Are you all right, miss?"

>"Yes, sir. Thank you for helping me."

>"No problem, missy. It's me job. What 're ya doin' out 'ere in the middle of de night anyway?"

>"Running from my past, sir."

>"Ya better get home now. You want me ta walk ya?"

>"No, thank you."

>"All right. You be careful."

>"Don't worry. He won't come after me again." *Tonight* she thought.

>Mathilda left the officer, and headed down the street to her apartment. When she got there, she noticed in the lobby that all her belongings were there. She run to see the landlady throwing her stuff out of her apartment.

>"Hey! What are you doing?"

>"You didn't pay ya rent this month. I told ya that would be the last straw" the crude old Irish woman said throwing Mathilda's suitcase out the door and closed it.

>"But, I did pay it. It was my last couple dollars. I didn't even eat for two days so I could pay it."

>"Well, I nevah got it. I nevah got youse eithah. Ya always dressed in ya's clothing dats fit fer a boy. I nevah saw da likes a dat ever. So, you go. Get outta my building, and don't come back!" she shouted walking to her apartment, and slamming the door. Mathilda stood there dazed and confused at all that had just happened in the past hour.

>Her night was suppose to be the same as every night. She'd go to work at the tavern as a waitress. But, that night, a drunken man demanded sex. She refused, and Macalister, the taverns owner, became enraged at her. He had always used her as a punching bag from the moment he conned her into working for him. He chased her down wanting to kill her. She knew he would do it too. Macalister had no soul. He was the devil to her. Now, she was being thrown out of her only shelter. She knew that she paid the rent, but the landlady, for some reason, hated her and wanted her gone. She got her wish.

>Mathilda picked up her belongings which weren't much. A small brown suitcase with a couple sets of clothing and her tape shoes, three books including her diary, and a small victrola (an early record player) with a few records. It was all she had. She walked out trying to carry all her stuff and not cry at the same time. She walked blocks away from her once shelter, and proceeded as far as she could from the tavern she use to work at.

>At the beginning of the Brooklyn bridge, she stopped. Dropping her belonging because her arms were tired, she plopped herself on the bridge. Her eyes filled with tears. She rarely cried, but this night was most depressing. That's when she let out a cry of pain that the whole city heard.

>"Wha' was dat?" asked a boy. He was in a group of four traveling across the bridge going home from a late night poker game.

>"Ise da know. Sound like it came from uppa head" another one said.

>They ran across the bridge to see a figure sitting on the side sobbing. They were cautious to walk up to it, but proceeded anyway.

>"I just want to die" they heard from the figure.

>Mathilda looked up hearing the sound of footsteps. She jumped up as fast as she could, and prepared herself to fight.

>"Who's there? Macalister, if you're here to kill me, I'm ready for a showdown! You're not going to take my life without my permission!"

>The group was surprised hearing this from someone they hadn't even seen yet. But, the leader walked up to her. "Ise ain't dis Macalister ya talkin' 'bout. Ya dont 'ave ta be scared a us." He walked up into the light where she could see him and the other. Mathilda settled down lowering her fist.

>"I'm sorry. I thought you were here to kill me" she said bluntly.

>"No. Me and me boys ain't murderers. Jist' newsies. Names Jack Kelly" he said spitting in his hand and placing it in front of Mathilda to smack. She thought the gesture was kind of gross, but she didn't care. She raised her hand up, spit in it, then shock his.

>"Mathilda Knowles."

>"Dese 'ere 're soma me newsies. Dats Race, Mush, and Kid Blink."

>They all nodded at her and said "hey", and she nodded back showing her tough exterior now. She knew she had to on the streets. Crying just wasn't expectable. If she appeared to be just another dame then she wouldn't be treated with respect. Macalister knew she was tough, but tried everything he could to wear her down.

>"Sorry I accused you all of coming after me. I thought you were someone else coming with his cronies."

>"Dats all roight. Say, why is a goirl like youse 'ut 'ere in da middlah of da night anyways?"

>"I've heard that question too many times tonight."

>"Do ya 'ave a place ta stay"

>
"No. I was kicked out of my apartment tonight by an old battle-ax. I hope she has a heart attack and dies."

>
"If youse wants, youse can stay at the Lodging house wheres we stay."

>
"I can."

>
"Coise youse can. Come on guys. Lets help 'er wid 'er stuff."

>
"Thank you."

>
"No problem."

>
Mathilda wasn't expecting anything good to happen to her from now on, but when she got to the lodging house, she felt better knowing she had a place to stay for a while.

>

>
They reached the Lodging House so late, most of the boys were asleep already. Mathilda took one of the spare beds. She woke to the chaos of boys getting dressed and ready for the day. It made a pretty interesting scene for her. She had never been around boys like this before. Jack saw she was awake and jumped off his bed.

>
"Evera' one! Dis is Mathilda. Shes gonna be wit us fer awhile. I want youse ta show some respect fer 'er. Okay?"

>
All the boys in the large room agreed, and went back to their business not asking questions. Mush walked up to Mathilda who was sitting on her bed not knowing what to do next.

>
"Ya sleep well?"

>
"Yeah. Felt the same as my bed in my apartment, but why should I complain? I have a roof over my head, and that's all that matters."

>
He noticed her face was a little pale and skinny. It looked like she hadn't had a meal or sleep in ages.

>
"Wes wondrin if youse wanna go get some breakful or sumptin?"

>
"I don't have any money. I was suppose to get paid last night, but that didn't work out."

>
"Dats all roight. We'll pay fer youse meal till youse can pay fer it. Isn't dat roight, Jack?"

>
"Ya, dats roight. Youse look like youse need a meal."

>
"Just let me get dressed."

>
Mathilda climbed out of bed, and went to the bathroom with her suitcase. She came out a few minutes later wearing a dark blue

button-up shirt with black suspenders and khaki pants. On the way to Tibby's, Race had daubed her Miss Tillie after a ship in the harbor, and Tillie is short for Mathilda. They walked into the restaurant, sat down, and ordered. Tillie wasn't saying much. She had her stern face on, but it didn't stop the boys from asking her questions.

>
"So, Tillie, wha' 'appen ta youse las' night? Ya seemed poitty shaken up" Jack asked.

>
"Well, I was working in a tavern and my boss got mad at me last night and came after me. Then my landlady kicked me out of my apartment."

>
"Dont ya 'ave any family youse can go live with?"

>
"Not really. My dad died two years. I know my aunt is out there somewhere, but I haven't seen her in years. So, I have no place to go. Thank goodness I was taught to be tough. I can fight with the best of 'em."

>
"Youse know how ta fight. Where'd youse learn how ta fight?"

>
"My dad taught me. We weren't rich, but we had enough money to have a good life. He wanted me to be tough. Not just another helpless woman. A panty waist as he use to say. I ain't one of those." The four looked at each other interested in what she had to say.

"Actually, my dad taught me how to fit in to any situation. I guess I'm an indirect actor in a way. But, I found myself more of a tomboy then a prissy girl even though I love doing tape dancing."

>
"Do ya think dat crazy boss a yours will come back fer ya?"

>
"He made a threat that he was bound to kill me last night. So, yes, he probably will. I shouldn't even be here in Manhattan or maybe even in New York City right now. But, I'm not scared. What's the point of being scared?"

>
"Do youses need any help like someone ta watch 'ut fer youse?"

>
"You don't have to. But if you want to, you can. How long can I stay at the lodging house?"

>
"As long as youse need, but youse gotta get a job."

>
"Waitressing is out. I'm never stepping into a tavern again."

>
"Hows would youse like ta be one a me newsies?"

>
"Okay. I'd love too."

>

>
A couple weeks went by. Tillie was fitting into the place just fine. Since she was tough and acted more like a boy then a girl her age, she was considered one of them. She was even tougher then some of the boys there. Her four new friends found she had a lot of hidden talents too. Tillie could cook, play poker, play the piano, act, and tap dance. She liked it at the lodging house better then being all alone.

>
It was about one o'clock in the afternoon one day at the Lodging House when a tall, blonde, blue eyed young man around eighteen strolled in casually. He went up to the desk where Kloppman sat.

>
"Ay mate" the young Austreian greeted tipping his fedora.

"Y'see, I just blow in and things are crock in the messul-brook fer me, so, I'm lookin' fer a place to rest me bones till I can get me self on me way."

>
"I don't think we have an extra bed left here" he replied.

>
"That's okay, mate, I can sleep on the floor."
>
"No can do, son."
>
"Why not, Kloppman? Wes can spare a few blankets er sumptin"
Jack said walking in with the others behind.
>
"The girl took the last bed, Cowboy."
>
"So! If he needs a place ta stay den he can stay 'ere."

>
"Thanks, mate" he said aggressively shacking Jack's hand. "The names Luke. Luke Jones. All the way from the Austriaian outback. Actually I went ta England first then came 'ere, but Australia is me mainland. I'm an Aussie no doubt."
>
"Yeah, no doubt. Good ta meet ya, Luke. I'm Jack Kelly an dis is a fewah me newsies- Mush, Race, Kid Blink, an Tillie."
>
Luke tipped his hat to all of them then turned his attention to Tillie grasping her hand and kissing it.
>
"Plesha ta meet ya, ma'am."
>
"Good to meet you too" Tillie greeted back smiling but wasn't too flattered at him charming her. She hated being put on the spot like that like that.
>
"Nows I know I ev a place ta sleep, 'here can I rest. The trip from England was hard."
>
"Youse can rest in my bed fer now. It the fourth bed ta da left upstairs " Jack offered.
>
"Thanks again, mate. I'll say hoo-roo ta you all."
>
Luke walked to the stairs tipping his fedora again. They watched until he got out of sight.
>
"Dat guy tawks strange. Wha' in da world is a hoo-roo?" Blink asked.
>
"Wha' da heck is a Aussie?" Race asked.
>
"I think that's what they call an Australian for short" Tillie replied.

>

>
The gang was outside one day in an ally way. Tillie was showing them a few tap dancing steps. Luke had tagged along as well.

>
"Hey Tillie, wha's dat funny move ya jist did called?" Blink asked pointing to her feet.
>
"This is a called a maxi four" she replied doing the step again. "Stomp, shuffle, toe, step. Get it?"
>
They all looked at her interestingly thinking she was one of them now.
>
"Yeah. Wes got it. We'll join ya in a while" Jack spoke for them.
>
"Say, Miss Tillie, where'd ya learn dose cockeyed steps? Dey look like sumptin da Aborigines in me mainland would do" Luke said.

>
"My dad and I use to take care of an old black man when I was little. He taught me. It's much better when you have a song to dance to."
>
She did another kind of step called ball-change out of habit. Just then, someone walled up. Everyone looked at him. Tillie didn't recognize him. It wasn't one of the Manhattan newsies she had been living with for the past month. Jack stood up, and walked over to him.
>
"Look who it is. If it ain't Spot Conlon. Wha' the heck yer ya doin' 'ere?"
>
"I was jist in de neighbor'od. Wanted ta drop by." He looked ahead to see Tillie. "Whos da goirl?"
>
"Dats one a my new newsies. Spot Conlon meet Miss Tillie Knowles."

>
"Hey" he said to her staying his distance.

>
"Hi" she greeted back.

>
All the boys sensed a little tension between the two for some reason. Luke took it upon himself to break the silence between everyone.

>
"Ay mate. Im Luke Jones. Some persons call me Aussie 'round 'ere. I one a Jack's new newsies too."

>
Luke grabbed Spot's hand, and energetically shock his hand.

>
"Kinda rough 're we?" Spot said throwing Luke's hand down.

>
"All us Aussies 're rough. It's from boxing wit all the dongers. That's a kangaroo."

>
"Wha' were all of youse doin'?"

>
"Tillie was showin' us some tape dancin'. She's a dancer an' evry'thing else in da world."

>
"Really."

>
He stared at Tillie for a few minutes. She was different looking then the rest of the girls in New York. Her long brown hair was down which was rare for any female to do. She wore boys' clothes. But, he blow off the thought of hitting on her. Probably wasn't worth his time anyway.

>
After a while, they all went to Tibby's for an early dinner. They all engaged in conversation. Tillie was one of the main subjects, but Luke tried to make himself known. Seeing how interesting the new girl newsie was, Spot thought it would be fun to talk with Tillie for a while, so, he sat next to her in the booth.

>
"Hey, uh, Tillie, roight?"

>
"Yeah."

>
"What's a lady like youse doin' hangin' 'round a bunch a rowdy newsies?"

>
"For one thing, I'm no lady. For another, these guys have been the best friends I've ever had."

>
"How'd ya get wit da newsies?"

>
Tillie looked at him crooked then proceeded to tell how she got with the Manhattan newsies and what they had been doin in the past month. She keep Spot's attention the whole time.

>
"Ya don' look like youse from 'round 'ere."

>
"You're right. I'm from around here. I'm from New Jersey. But, me and my dad moved here after my mom died. Which was a long time ago. What about you?"

>
"I got wit da newsies years ago, but my storys nuttin' special" he said lying. He knew his life was something more then just nothing. "Hows yer job goin'?" He wanted to get off the subject.

>
"What? Being a newsie? It's all right. Better then where I was working before."

>
"Where was dat at?"

>
"Didn't I tell ya I worked at a tavern here in Manhattan" she said nervously fiddling with a lock of her hair.

>
"Ise know mosta Manhattan poitty good. Which tavern?"

>
"Ahâ€|" she murmured out. *He's getting too deep. I can't tell anyone*. She though. The others had respected her plea to not ask questions, but Spot didn't know she wanted her secrets to stay a secret. "Can you excuse me?" Tillie stood up, and walked out the restaurant quickly. Everyone looked at Spot with a bewildered expression on his face. The others watched her walk out then turned to Spot for an explanation.

>
"Wha'd ya do ta 'er?" Mush asked.

>
"Ise ain't did nuttin. Ise was askin' 'er a question and she got all nervous and left."

>
"I'll go see if shes all roight."

>
Mush stood up and went back to the lodging house where he assumed Tillie would be. He walked in the bunkroom where a few guys were sitting around on their beds doing various activities. He went to the end of the room, and, sure enough, Tillie was laying on her bed staring at the top bunk which was Blink's. He sat down beside her.

>
"Youse okay, Tillie?"

>
"Yeah. Why?"

>
"Ya left so 'ast. Did Spot say sumptin ta youse ta make ya upset? If he did, I'll soak 'em fer ya."

>
"No. And I don't want you to soak anyone for me."

>
"Den why'd ya leave so soon?"

>
"I just wanted to leave. Thats all. Could ya answer me one question, Mush?" He nodded. "Who is this Spot Conlon anyway? He just shows up out of nowhere and joins in on the gang."

>
"Spot Conlon es the leadah of da Brooklyn newsies. 'im and Jack a been knowin' each ouddahs fer a long time. He don' come 'round heres too offen. I dink he keeps ta himself mosta da time. But, he is quit a Casanova when it comes ta ladies."

>
"Whatcha mean?"

>
"I mean half da goirls of New Yawk 're afta 'im."

>
"What about the other half?"

>
"Ise don know 'bout da othah half. Ise jist know wha' I hear." Mush looked away from her focusing his eyes on the floor. "Say, I know ya don' wanna tell us wha' 'appen ta ya before ya came 'ere, but could ya give me a reason why?"

>
Tillie sighed with frustration. She didn't want to talk about that subject. They were all suspicious about what she was hiding. Why did this man, Macalister, want kill her? Most of 'em just blow it off. Tillie was a lotta fun to be around, and they didn't want lose her as a friend.

>
"I just can't talk about it. Can ya please mind your business." Mush looked at her again shocked to hear her mean comment. He stood up, but Tillie grabbed his arm.

>
"Mush, wait, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be so cruel. Forgive me, please." He stared at her for a moment knowing he would. They didn't say anything just embraced. They let go as the rest of the gang was walking in with Spot Conlon in tow. Jack walked up to her first touching her shoulder.

>
"Youse all roight?"

>
"I'm fine. Just needed sometime alone."

>
"Okay€|if ya say ya all roight, Ise believe ya."

>
Spot walked up to her next.

>
"Can we tawk?"

>
"Sure."

>
He started to walk out the room. Tillie followed shrugging at her friends. They stopped when they walked out of the building sitting on the stairs.

>
"Whatcha want?" Tillie asked looking him straight in the eye trying to show her tough exterior like she always did.

>
"Did I do sumptin ta youse to make ya upset? If I did, I'm sorry."

>
"No, ya didn't do anything. It's me. Talking about my past is hard."

>
"Yeah. Ise know how ya feel."

>
"I just got a little off track when you asked me about the

tavern I use to work at. I don't like the subject, so, could ya please not bring it up?"

>
"I wont."

>
"Thanks. Hey, um, I heard a little bit about you."

>
"Ya did. Wha'd ya hear?"

>
"I heard that half the girls in New York were after you."

>
"Who said dat?"

>
"Mush did. I wondered what about the other half of the girls.

Then, I thought, since you're such a ladies man, you probably already dated the other half."

>
Spot smiled shaking his head. Tillie laughed at the expression on his face noticing his crystal blue eyes. *He has some beautiful eyes, but some of the goofiest expressions I ever seen*. She thought.

>
"Well, it was just a theory."

>
"Good theory, but no cigar."

>
The sun was setting over the builds. Tillie glared on as Spot stood up. He had become intreged with this girl he just met that day. *She has a different kinda attitude toward things. She kinda poitty too. Doesn' act like most goirls*. He thought to himself.

>
"Its gettin' late. Ise gotta be headin' back ta Brooklyn. Tell Jack I said bye, fer me."

>
"I'll do that. Bye."

>
"See ya."

>
He gave her a low wave, and walked off handling his cane. Tillie watched him until he was out of sight then went back into the lodging house. She trekked to her bed, and plop down. Blink and Race noticed her back, and went to talk to her.

>
"Hey, Tillie. Wha'd Conlon 'ave ta say?" Race asked sitting next to her on her bed. Blink sat on the other side.

>
"And wha' did 'e do ta ya ta make ya leave Tibby's?" Blink asked.

>
"He just wanted to apologize for upsetting me tonight."

>
" 'e upset ya?" Race said defensively. "Ya wan' me ta soak 'em fer ya?"

>
"No. I don't want ya soakin' anyone. He didn't know about respecting my privacy like you guys do."

>
"Ya know youse can always talk ta us if sumptin' botherin' you" Blink said putting his hand on her shoulder.

>
"I know. I just can't say anything about that right now. I can't tell you guys anything. Not now."

>
"If youse want it dat way, we'll respect it."

>
"Thanks guys."

>
Race and Blink left Tillie to go to sleep.

>

>
A week went by. Nothing much was happening around the lodging house. The newsies sold papers, as usual. It was pretty much boring for the whole week. At the end of the week, Tillie had finished selling early, and walked around Manhattan till she spotted Luke just finishing up on his selling.

>
"Hey Luke" she aid walking up to him. Luke glanced back at her with his cockeyed look.

>
"Heya Miss Tillie." He tipped his hat to her like he always did. Tillie had noticed he did that a lot . *Must be a habit of his.* She thought.

>
"Finish early, ay?"

>
"Yeah. I had a good sell today. How 'bout I buy you lunch?"

>
"I couldn't take ya money, Miss Tillie."
>
"You're not taking it. I'm buying you lunch. I want to do it."

>
"Cri-key! thanks, Miss Tillie. Ya bloods worth bottlen."

>
Tillie had no idea what that meant. Most statements Luke said were foreign to her and the other newsies even though they talked in slang too. Luke picked up his satchel he carried around his shoulder, and they started to Tibby's. They sat in a booth, and ordered.

>
"So, Miss Tillie, can I ask ya a question?"
>
"Go ahead."
>
"Okayâ€¦I'm gonna give it a bash. I want ta know if ya would be me goirl?" Tillie groaned on the inside. She didn't feel like answering the question. Getting caught up in a relationship with a friend was something she feared most. She tolerated Luke most of the time. With his weird sayings and aggressive attitude, she had to tolerate him.
>
"To put it litely, Luke, I don't wanna be in a relationship right now with anyone. Sorry. Maybe one day."
>
Luke's face grow dark. She didn't know how to take that expression. He stared right into her eyes. Tillie was getting more nervous by the second until she saw Boots and Snipeshooter walk in. She stood up fast to get their attention.
>
"Hi-a guys. Over here. Come and join us. We finished early."

>
"Hey Tillie. Hey Aussie. Good sell today?" Boots asked sitting next to
>
Tillie. Snipeshooter sat next to Luke.
>
"Yeah. Great day. How 'bout youse?"
>
"It was all roight. Got slow 'round eleven."
>
Tillie breathe a sigh of relief when they came in. She didn't trust Luke very much. His temper was a little hot sometimes. She knew it first hand when he came in one night after losing his money in a poker game. She watched him as he went to the washroom and heard a loud crash a few seconds later. When he came out, no one looked at him for fear he might attack them.
>

>
That night, a big poker game was going on in Brooklyn. Everyone was going including Tillie. She had saved up enough money to spend, but didn't want to spend it on anything material things. She wanted to make more.
>
"Tillie, youse sure ya wanna take on da Brooklyn newsies?" Blink asked as they walked together to Brooklyn. "Deys poirtty good."

>
"Not as good as me dough" Race bragged.
>
"Yeah roight, Race" Blink said slapping his friend on the head.

>
"I ain't scared of those guys. You all know I'm good."

>
"Wese jist didn' want ya ta lose ya money" Mush said being fretful.
>
"I know. Trust me, I can handle anything."
>
The four walked into the Brooklyn Lodging House. It was full of rowdy newsies playing poker or cheering some of their friends on. A loud shout came from the middle of the room. A newsie from Queens had just lost all his money to Spot Conlon. He stormed out pushing a trail through the crowd. The four made their way to the middle of the room where the game was going on. Spot was standing holding up his

money that he just won.

>
"Does any of youse lousy bums wanna join?" he asked the crowd around him. Tillie took the opportunity to come forward.

>
"I'll join."

>
The room fell in silence. A girl playing poker was unheard of around there. Spot looked at her amusingly thinking it would be some more quick money.

>
"Miss Tillie, how ya been?" he asked sitting back down.

>
"Good. Now, are you going to deal or what?" she said sitting down as well.

>
All the boys in the room awed at her comment. Spot saw her as a challenge instead of a threat though. He devied up the cards, and the four players including two other newsies from somewhere began to play poker. After five games, Spot had lost almost all of his money, and was frustrated as heck that he had lost it to a girl. Tillie was pleasantly grinning every time she won a game as all her friends from Manhattan cheered her on. Two new players had came in on the game as the other two lost all their money as well.

>
Tillie sat there with her stern, unthoughtful face holding her cards. Spot had put in his last ten cents, and laid his cards down.

>
"Try and beat this. Full house."

>
Tillie glanced at the cards then at her's. "I think I did it, Spot." She laid her cards down. "Straight flush." All the boys awed again. Tillie proceeded to take her money she had won, stuffed it in her pocket, and stood up. Spot was still dumbfounded at how she won five games in a row. He stood up in anger.

>
"Wheres you goin', Tillie?"

>
"I'm quiteing. What does it look like I'm doing?"

>
"You can't quite. Not now. Ise gotta get me money back."

>
"I'm tired of playing. I want to quite so I am."

>
Tillie started to walk through the crowd when something grabbed her arm.

>
"I want youse ta stay in da game."

>
This guys impossible. She thought. "Let go of my arm."

>
"No."

>
"Ise fight ya den."

>
"I don't wanna fight."

>
"Spot, if she wants ta quite, let 'er" Jack's voice said over the crowd. Spot gave out a frustrated sigh. Tillie was getting impatient about him still holding her arm. She pushed him off with her free hand, walked through the crowded, and disappeared. Everyone stared at Spot who wasn't too pleased at the moment. He stormed off through the crowd in the opposite direction.

>
Tillie had left the Lodging House to go back to Manhattan alone not telling her friends that she left. She felt mad about the money she had made. She didn't want to have an enemy inside of the newsie ring, but it looked like she had just made one. And, one of the most dangerous ones at that. She was coming up on the Brooklyn Bridge when she felt something touch her shoulder lightly. She spun around, slapping away the thing that was there. To her surprise, it was only a cane that had touch her shoulder, but on the end of it was Spot Conlon. He stood there in the dim light staring at her without saying a word. He looked like he was about to hit with his cane, but stuck it back into his belt.

>
"What do you want? Are you here to beat me up? If you want your

money, take it. I don't want you stinkin' money" Tillie said pulling out a chunk of money out her pocket.

>
"I don' want da money. Ya won it fair and square."

>
"Then what do you want?"

>
"Why ya so defenseful, goirl?"

>
"Maybe I have to be so I won't get beat up by jerks like you."

>
"I don' wanna beat ya up, Tillie. Wha' makes ya think dat?"

>
"The way you were being so aggressive tonight."

>
"Ise sorry 'bout dat, okay? Me temper can get a little outta control sometimes."

>
"I've noticed. You still haven't told me why you're following me though."

>
"Ise come ta walk ya back ta Manhattan. I saw dat da other guys weren't gone, but youse was. I saw ya through me window walkin' down da street, and decided ta follow ya jist incase ya get jumped."

>
"You followed me to protect me" Tillie said suspiciously. "Let's get going then."

>
They walked for awhile in silence. Tillie had knew from the time they met there was some kind of odd tension between them. She didn't understand why. She had only known Spot for a week. They were almost to the lodging house when Tillie got an idea. She knew Spot probably wasn't mad at her, but she felt guilty for winning all of his money. She stopped and turned to him.

>
"Have you ever had a milk mult?"

>
"Wha' da heck es a milk mult?"

>
"That's answers my question. Come on." She grasped his hand, and lead him into an ally that lead to another street. A few stepped later, they were in front of a small caf  . Tillie walked in with Spot behind her, and sat down on the bar stools at the counter. She rang the bell that was on the counter. A tall man with an apron on came out.

>
"Can I help you two kids?"

>
"Yeah, Mr. Henderson, I would like a milk mult, and get one for my friend here."

>
"Comin' up."

>
The man disappeared into the back again. A few minutes later, he came out holding two glasses with a spoon in it, and a while liquid in them. He set them down on the counter.

>
"Here ya go. Two milk mults."

>
"Thanks Mr. Henderson."

>
Tillie started to scoop the liquid down as Spot stared at it for a minute.

>
"What is it?"

>
"It's creamed milk with ice shavings."

>
"And that's good?"

>
"Try it. You'll like it."

>
He pick up the spoon, dished a little bit of the stuff out the glass, and put it in his mouth. Like Tillie said, it was good. In a few minutes, both of their glasses were empty.

>
"Was it good?" Tillie asked noticing Spot looked full.

>
"Yeah, it was all roight."

>
"I knew you'd like. I just hope we can call a truce or something."

>
"A afraid ta make enemies wit Spot Conlon, huh?"

>
"No. I don't want to make any enemies. I have enough already."

>
"Yeah, we can call a truce" Spot said spitting in his hand, and putting it out to shake. Tillie did the same, and they left.

>
It was late, but Tillie still didn't want to go back to the lodging house. The others probably weren't back yet anyway. So, she headed to Central Park. Spot didn't say a word about it; just followed her till she stopped by a tree.

>
"Wanna play a game?"

>
"In da dark?"

>
"Yeah. It's a game that's suppose ta be played in the dark. Why? Do you have better things to do?"

>
"No."

>
"Then don't be a party pooper."

>
"What's da game den?"

>
"Hiding and seek."

>
"Dat's a kids game."

>
"Not the way I play it."

>
"How do ya play it?" he asked giving her his goofy expression. She shook her head at him.

>
"You count. I hide. But you don't go seek me. You stay here and keep guard of the flag which could be your cane or something. I have to try and get the flag, but you have to try and stop me. If you catch me, I have to hide again. If I get the flag, you have to hide. What do ya say?"

>
"Okay, I'll try it, but only because wese 'ave nuttin' else ta do." Spot began to count and Tillie went to hide. Over a hour later, Spot was the winner of the game by capturing the flag, er, his cane five times. By then, it was very late. They headed back to the Manhattan Lodging House. They walked in to see hardly any newsies there. The ones there were asleep already. They tiptoed to Tillie's bed. She clasped on her bed laughing to herself. Spot sat on the bed next to her's.

>
"What's so funny?"

>
"I was just thinking of what happen tonight. First, we were rivals playing poker. We almost got into a fight. We indirectly apologize to each other. Had a great time playing hide and seek. Now, we're here exhausted."

>
"Yeah. Dat is strange. Ise exhausted too."

>
"Why don't ya stay here tonight? It's a long way back to Brooklyn, and I don't think Race would mind ya sleeping in his bed that ya on now. All of them probably won't be back for hours."

>
"Well, I guess I could stay fer da night. All roight."

>
They got ready for bed. When their heads hit their pillows, they both fell fast asleep. It was a couple more hours till the others came in. Tillie woke up from someone shaking her. She opened her eyes slowly to see Race beside her.

>
"Hey, Tillie, could ya tell me why Spot Conlon is in me bed?"

>
"What?" she murmured raising her head. She remember what had happen. "O, that. He was walking me back here, but instead we went out for a milk mult then played a rough game of hide and seek in the park. He was too tires ta go back ta Brooklyn. I told him he could sleep in your bed for the night. Are ya mad at me?"

>
"No. I jist need a place ta sleep, and I ain't sleepin' on da floor."

>
"Here. Climb in" she said raising her covers.

>
"Are ya sure?"

>
"Yeah. Just don't try anything."

>
"Don' worry. I'm a perfect gentlemen."
>
"Ha!"
>
Race climbed into Tillie's bed separated from her by one blanket.
>
"If he drools on me pillow, Ise gonna soak ya."
>
"Fair enough."
>

>
Spot woke up confused about where he was. The sun was just coming up. He looked around at all the Manhattan newsies and realized where he was. He stood up slowly then walked around to Tillie's bunk, and shook her awake. Tillie opened her eyes.
>
"What?" she asked sleepily closing her eyes again.
>
"Ise headin' back ta Brooklyn" he replied.
>
"Okay. See ya later, Spot."
>
Spot started to walk off when he heard someone call his name.

>
"Spot. Ya bettah not of got any of ya drool on me pillow" Race said climbing out of Tillie's bed, and back into his. Spot turned around.
>
"Don' worry, Race. I only sneezed on it" he said laughing.

>
"Get outta 'ere" Race said throwing his pillow at Spot.

>

>
A few months went by. Spot had come back to Manhattan a whole bunch of times just to hang around the gang. Mostly Tillie though. They thought it was weird having Spot Conlon there. He rarely came to Manhattan. Only when he had to, or to talk with Jack. Tillie didn't think that it was strange that he was there. She was enjoying it. They were becoming quick friends. Tillie still had a lot of money left over from the poker game. She had no idea what to do with it. She didn't want to spend it on herself. She didn't have any desire to buy anything anyway. She stared around the bunkroom at all her friends, and came up with the best idea.
>
I bet these guys haven't had a home cooked meal in ages. Some a them, probably never had one. I know exactly what to do now with my money. She thought.
>
That afternoon, she walked to Tibby's after selling all her papes. The cook was in the back. She walked through the kitchen door, and surprised him.
>
"Miss Tillie, what are you doing back here?" he asked looking up from soup he was making.
>
"Can I ask a favor, Mr. Johnston?"
>
"Sure, girl, what is it?"
>
"Can I use your kitchen tomorrow? I promise I'll clean it after I'm done with it, and I'll pay for all the food I use. And, you don't even have to cook."
>
"You want to use my kitchen? For what?"
>
"I want ta cook the guys a special home cooked meal."

>
"How are ya gonna pay for it?"
>
"I won a lot of money playin' poker several weeks ago. Couldn't think of anything to do with it."
>
"Won't this take away from my business?"
>
"Now, you know the only business that comes in here are newsies."
>
The cook shook his head in agreement then went on to make the day's special. Tillie found Jack, and told him to tell all the newsies to be at Tibby's the next night. And, to wear their formal clothes which was just a jacket over their regular good clothes. She

sent Boots to Brooklyn to give Spot a message to be at Tibby's the next night.

>
The next day after she finished selling, she went over to Tibby's and began to cook for hours. She made red beans and rice which was a dish the old black man her father use to take care of taught her. She baked corn bread and churned ice milk for milk mulds for dessert. When she finished, she looked over her work with pride then at the clock. It was almost time for all the guys to show up. She hurried to push all the tables together then go back to the lodging house to change into her dress pants and her navy blue sweater. She ran back to Tibby's where only Jack had arrived. He was sitting at the table waiting.

>
"Hey, Jack. Where's everyone else at?" she asked.

>
"Theys comin'. So, wha' ya up to, Tillie?"

>
"I made all of ya's a home cooked meal."

>
"Really. That'd be a foist fer almost all a us."

>
"That's why I did it. All of youse deserve it."

>
"Thanks a lot, Tillie."

>

>
The next hour, all the newsies poured into the restaurant in their best like Jack told them to come. They were all questioning each other, but no one knew why they had to be there dressed up. Finally, Tillie came out of the kitchen and quited them down.

>
"Guys!" Tillie shouted over the ruckus. Jack whistled and everyone shut up.

>
"Thanks Jack. Okay, I know you all are wondering why I wanted ya'll to be here tonight in your good clothes. The reason is because this is a special night. You all may not think so, but it is to me. I had a home and a parent and a good life unlike most of youse did. But, I had all of it taken away from me. I understand how it feels to be in the gutter. I thought I was going to have to stay there too. Then I met youse guys a few months ago. I found real friends that I never had in my life. I wanted to do something special for all of youse because I love you guys. I didn't know what to do for all of youse so I made a home cooked meal. I know most of ya never had one before. It was the only thing I could come up with. That's basically it. I'll go get the food now." She turned away from all the staring eyes and went into the kitchen. Mush, Blink, and Race followed her.

>
"Hey, Tillie" Blink said walking into the kitchen. "Did ya mean all a that?"

>
Tillie turned to face them. "Of course, I did. To you guys especially. Ya'll have been the best friends I ever had."

>
"And wese honored ta be ya best friends" Race said.

>
They all embraced for a moment then they helped her bring out the food. The pot of red beans and rice was passed down the table with some newsies getting inpatient about it taking so long to get to them. After awhile, they were all settled and eating like civilized people for once. Tillie looked around to see that Spot wasn't there. She asked Boots if he took the message to Spot. He replied yes. There was hardly any red beans and rice left after all the newsies got to it. Tillie tried to save a little for Spot just in case he came.

>
When all the food was gone, most of the newsies thanked Tillie for the meal then left. Of course, Mush, Race, and Blink stayed to help clean up. Luke stayed too. He wasn't mad at Tillie for turning him down anymore, but he still tried to hit on her just in case she changed her mind. The door of the restaurant opened as Tillie was

picking up some dirty dishes. She didn't look up to see who it was.

>
"Tibby's is closed" she said.

>
"I was hopin' you'd 'ave sumptin left fer me" the person said.

>
Tillie looked up to see Spot.

>
"Where have ya been?"

>
"Don' be mad, but Ise was takin' care a some business."

>
"What business?"

>
"It ain't your business Ise can say dat."

>
"Sorry. I shouldn't be so noisy. I have some beans left if you want it"

>
"Sure. I'll eat some just ta see how good a cook youse 're."

>
"You'd be surprised."

>
Tillie brought the dishes in the back, and came back out with a half full bowl of red beans for Spot. She set it down on the table, and sat down next to him. He started eating.

>
"Da others don' need ya?" he asked seeing she had sat down with him.

>
"I need to ask you something. I was going to ask you earlier, but you weren't here."

>
"Go head. Wha' es it?"

>
"I need you to escort me to this" she said pulling out two blue colored sheets of paper out the pocket of her sweater. Spot took them from her, and read what was written on them.

>
"You 'ave been invited ta da annul Mayor's Ball. Come formally dressed. Date of Ball on da fifteenth of July. Bring one guest" he stopped, and handed Tillie the tickets. "Youse didn' really get sent dose tickets, didja?"

>
"No. I made them, but I know that these are exactly the same as the real ones."

>
"And whys may Ise ask dat youse asked me?"

>
"Because you're one of my best friend."

>
"Why not one a dose guys in dare?"

>
"I don't know about them. For one, a lot of people might recognize Jack because of the strike last year. No telling what's under Blink's eye patch. Race and Luke have equally loud mouths. The others I don't think they'd want to do this thing. That leaves you or Mush."

>
"Youse roight. Ise da bettah chose. I'll go wit ya."

>
"Thanks a bunch."

>
"Wha' ya want me ta wear?"

>
"I'll take care a that. You just show up lodging house tomorrow." Spot finished up the red beans, pushed the bowl away, and sat back in his chair.

>
"Dat was wondahful Tillie. Youse sure know how da cook."

>

>
At six o'clock the next evening, Spot showed up at the Manhattan Lodging House. Tillie throw him a pair of white pants, white shirt, and black suspenders as she was rushing into the washroom to get dressed. Spot changed, and talk to a few newsies until Tillie stepped out of the washroom. All eyes turned to look at her. They're eyes widened when they saw what she was wearing.

>
"Tillie, youse wearin' a dress" Mush said surprised. "You look wondahful". Tillie was wearing a white lace tapered dress with a matching hat. Her long brown hair was up in a braid which was never

the scene any other time.

>
"Yeah, so! I'm still the same person ya been knowin' fer months now" she remarked walking past the group of newsies Spot was talking to. She saw they were still staring. "You guys stop lookin' at me, please!"

>
"Youse look beautiful, Tillie" Blink said. Tillie rolled her eyes, and walked up to them.

>
"I don't want none of youse treatin' me any different from what ya have been. I'm still Tillie "tough as nails" Knowles with or without the dress. Ya got that? If ya don't, I'll soak ya to make sure ya do." All the guys nodded in agreement.

>
"Sorry, Miss Tillie, wese jist surprised at how portty you look" Luke said puffing on his cigarette.

>
Tillie sighed loudly and slumped a little scanning the faces of her friends. She finally faced Spot, and held out her hand.

>
"Come on. We gotta get goin'."

>
She dragged him out the room with a few whistles coming from the friends they had just left. A few seconds later they heard her shout "Shut up" from the stairs. Tillie and Spot walked to the New York Bouquet Hall where the Mayor's Ball was being held. Tillie stopped for a moment.

>
"Ya sure ya wanna do this?" Spot asked her seeing the nervousness on her face.

>
She turned to him with a little more confidence. "Yes. I want to. Me and my dad use to do this all the time."

>
"You and ya dad musta did a lotta stuff?"

>
"Too much ta even remember." Her nervousness grew a little more by the mentioning of her father. "But, remember tonight youse go by you're real name which would be?"

>
"Benjamin. Ben Conlon."

>
"You're name's Ben? I like that name. It fits ya."

>
"Well, I like Spot bettah."

>
Tillie gave him a look then grasped his hand, and they strolled up to the door calmly. She handed the guard the invitation. He examined them for a moment then looked up at the two kids standing before him.

>
"Proceed" he said.

>
Tillie breathe a sigh of relief as they walked into the huge ballroom full of politicians, bankers, lawyers with their wives. The men were on one side of the room, and the women were on the other gabbing away with each other. It seemed like two different worlds were in the same room. Spot glanced over at Tillie with a smile on his face.

>
"Now, dis is comedy" he remarked.

>
"Time for me to put on my best performance" Tillie said softening her expression to appear more lady like. She sauntered over to a group of rambling ladies and joined in with them like she had known them for years. Spot stood at the back of the room watching her performance.

>
Dat goirls a real character, she is. I wonder how she learned to fit in so good?. He glared around the room. Wha da heck am I doin' 'ere? At da Mayor's Ball fer goodness sake! She didn' even 'ave ta beg or pay me. I came fer her. He thought to himself.

>
A while pasted before Tillie took a peek at Spot to him still standing in the back of the room alone leaning against a wall. She gave a frustrated sigh, and walked up to him.

>
"What are you doing?"

>
"Standin' 'ere watchin' youse make a fool of ya self."

>
"Gee, thanks for giving me a blunt answer, Benjamin!" She drug out his name.

>
"Ya welcome, Mathilda."

>
Tillie's mouth became agape. "Who told you my real name?"

>
"Blink did."

>
"I'm gonna soak 'em when we get back to the lodging house."

>
"I'll help ya fer fun."

>
They laugh with each other for a moment.

>
"Say, why are ya not talkin' with the big guys over there?"

>
"Ise don' wanna tawk ta any a dem."

>
"Why don' ya talk with the ladies over there?"

>
"Ya havin' fun over dare?"

>
"Foolin' them is fun. I'm not who I really am. You can be anyone if you want to."

>
"Are ya who ya really 're wit da newsies?"

>
"Of coise I am. Ise a newsie all da way and dares nuttin' youse can do 'bout it."

>
"Youse can tawk like us, but 're ya really one?"

>
"Yes" she said in an edgy tone.

>
"Okay. Okay. I believe ya." Spot glanced back over to the crowd. "Are ya goin' back over dare?"

>
"Ya, and you're comin' with me" she said grabbing his hand and dragging him over to the crowd of ladies.

>

>
It was almost eleven o'clock when Tillie and Spot left the party. They strolled through the streets of Manhattan laughing at the events that happen that evening as they headed back to the lodging house. "I can't believe when that lady asked you 'May I ask who you are, son?' and you said 'Ise Brooklyn' and the lady cocked her head at you and said 'I didn't know the Mayor of Brooklyn had a son'. I wanted to crack up laughing" Tillie said laughing so hard she was almost crying. Spot just smiles at her enjoying the company.

>
"Youse musta had a good time tonight den?" he asked as they walked.

>
"Of course, I did. We have to do this again."

>
Silence fell over them for a moment with Tillie still letting out a giggle every now and then. Spot keep glancing at her.

>
"Y'know, youse do look gorgeous in dat dress" he finally said what he'd been wanting to say all night.

>
"I heard that enough tonight, but thanks anyway."

>
"Why don' ya evah wear a dress? I nevah seen ya wear one till today."

>
"Well, I didn't have any female influence in me life. My mother died when I was a baby. My dad always wanted a son. He never remarried, so, he sorta turned me into his make shiff son. I always had a chose to wear dresses, but I found that it was easier to wear pants. So, I did. And, my dad always taught me to be tough. Never show your weak side. Always be tough, and you'll get respect. All my life, I've been tough, and I got respect for it too. Until Macalister forced me to work at his tavern, but that's a story I want to forget."

>
"Who is dis Macalister fellah anyway?"

>
"Like I said, I just want to forget he ever existed. Got me?" Tillie asked as her face turned to stone.

>
"Got ya. I won' mention it again."
>
"Thank you." Tillie stopped. They had made it to the lodging house. "We're here. I guess I'll see ya later?"
>
"Yeah. I'll visit ya soon."
>
"I'll visit ya instead. Okay?"
>
"Wese see. Bye Tillie."
>
"Bye."
>
She watched Spot walk off until he disappeared around a building. His mind was reeling thinking about her. Tillie was someone special instead of just another girl. She was as tough as him, and he liked it. He walked across the Brooklyn Bridge thinking (He's singing this in his head. It's a song I wrote. I can't believe I wrote a song!)

>
"I never met a girl so pretty
>I never met a girl so strong
When I'm around her
>I get all wrapped up I know
I wish I could tell her I love her

>But I'm afraid of what she'll say
Will she say she loves me too

>I wish I knew what to do
I was use to having any girl I wanted

>And any girl who walked my way
But this girl that they call Tillie
>Is driving me mad
But it isn't bad
>Because I love her my way"

>

>
Tillie turned to walk in the lodging house when she saw a tiny light in the air. As her eyes adjusted on the light, she saw a figure. Her fears of it being Macalister hit her, but was realized when she heard the figures slang tongue.
>
"Miss Tillie, ya back already" Luke said out of the darkness.

>
"Luke! Ya scared me half ta death. Don't evah do that again" she whispered loudly stepping over to him.
>
"Sorry 'bout dat."
>
"Whatcha doin' out here anyways?"
>
"Ise waitin' fer you. Da boys in dare 're playin' dare poker an' cards an' whatevah. I needed a smoke, so, I came out heres to wait fer ya's. And, I wanted ta ask ya sumptin."
>
"What is it?"
>
"You look so ladylike in dat dress. Ya beautiful. Ya need ta dress like dat more. And, ya need ta be me goirl. Because Ise need ya."
>
"I can't be ya girl Luke. I'm already someone's girl."

>
"And who is dat?"
>
"I'm Spot Conlon's girl! So, back off!"
>
Tillie stormed in the lodging house knowing she was lying. But, it felt so good to say it. Spot Conlon's girl. She loved the sound of it. It was the first time she had ever found herself falling in love with someone. She ran up the stairs taking off her top which had a white tank top undershirt underneath, and strolled in the bunkroom tearing off her skirt that had a slip underneath. All faces turned to her when she entered the room followed by some whistles.
>
"I told youse guys ta shut up before I left!" she shouted walking up to her friends who were playing poker. "Hey Tillie" they all greeted.
>
"Heya guys. Hows the game goin'?"
>
"Great fer me. Ise won two rounds so far" Race bragged holding his cigar and his cards in his hand.

>
"Can ya deal me in?"
>
"Sure. Dares always room fer ya's" Mush said.
>
She sat down between Race and Blink. They dealt her in, and began to play cards again.
>
"So, Tillie, wha's goin' on between youse and Spot Conlon?" Race asked curiously.
>
"Nuttin' goin' on. Wese just pals like you and me."

>
"Why'd ya take 'em ta dat thing youse were goin' to tonight? Whys didn' ya take me?"
>
" 'Cause ya mouth is too big. Ya woulda scared everyone off."

>
The gang got a kick out of that one, and agreed with Tillie.

>

>
Luke woke up early the next morning, and headed to Brooklyn to find Spot. The thought of Tillie being someone else's girl was unheard of to him. He walked in the Brooklyn Lodging House as the Brooklyn newsies were just getting up themselves. Faces turned to stare at the stranger. Luke tipped his fedora at them. He went to the end of the bunkroom where he found Spot coming out of his own room.

>
"Spot Conlon, wese need ta tawk?" Luke asked. Spot glared up at him.

>
"Aussie, roight?" he asked fiddling with his cane.

>
"Yeah. Dat's me."

>
"Whys youse 'ere?"

>
"Ya see, Ise been tryin' ta get Miss Tillie ta be me goirl 'cause who wouldn't want dat beautiful creature ta be ya goirl?"

>
"Get ta ya point."

>
"Da girl told me last night straight in me face dat she was your goirl. If she is, I need ta defend wha' is suppose ta be mine."

>
"Wait one second, Aussie. Tillie ain't me goirl. She nevah has. Probably nevah will be. Youse shouldn't claim 'er as yours anyway" Spot said in a defenseful tone.

>
"O, well, den. Sorry fer buggin ya. Ise see ya later." Luke walked off as calm as he came in. Spot looked around at his newsies who were staring at him.

>
"Wha' youse lookin' at?" he yelled. They turned away from him, and went back to their business.

>

>
After he finished selling his papes, Spot trekked back over to Manhattan to get information out of Tillie about her being his girl. He walked into Tibby's where he knew she would be eating lunch with the rest of the newsies. Sure enough, she was sitting in a booth with Jack and Boots talking and eating. He went over to the table. Tillie saw him approaching. A large grin fell upon her face.

>
"Hey Spot. Whatcha doin' back in Manhattan?"

>
"Wese gotta tawk" he commanded grabbing her wrist, and taking her outside. She looked back at her friends and shrugged.

>
"What's da problem?"

>
"I was informed today by ya friend, Aussie, dat youse was me goirl. Ya know, Ise did not know dis" he said in a sarcastic tone.

>
"Luke! Dang it! I didn't know he was gonna tell ya that."

>
"Please, 'splain ta me why ya said it."
>
"Look, Luke is always hitting on me. I can't nevah stand it when he does. And last night he was indirectly tellin' me dat I was his. He thought he would jist claim me or something. So, I told 'em I was your girl."
>
"Is dat it?"
>
"Yeah. Why?"
>
Tillie saw Spot's face go from anger to sadness. He turned from her so they couldn't make eye contact.
>
"Spot, why?"
>
"Nuttin'."
>
"What is it? Ya look like ya about ta cry or something." He still didn't respond to her. "What do ya care if I said I was ya girl or not?"
>
"Because I love you, Tillie!"
>
Tillie froze at those words. No one except her father had ever said that to her. Her mind started running thinking of how much she had fallen for him too.
>
"Do ya mean it?" she finally got out on the verge of crying herself.
>
"Coise I mean it! Why would I say it?! Youse been in me thoughts, me mind, me life evah since da night of da poker game when we walked 'round Manhattan havin' a good time. Youse jist so different from othah goirls. Dat's wha' makes ya special. Why'd ya think Ise been comin' 'round Manhattan so much? Ise nevah been 'round 'ere so much in me life."
>
Tillie was at a lose of words. She just stared at him. He stared right back.
>
"You really love me?"
>
"Didn' I jist say dat?"
>
"O, Spot. I can't believe this is happen" she said throwing her arms around his neck closing her eyes. He returned the embrace. "I love you too."
>
Spot breathe a sigh of relief when he heard those words.

>
"Its 'bout time ya said dat."
>
Tillie opened her eyes to see most of her friends staring out the window of Tibby's.
>
"We better go somewhere private to tawk. We have an audience." Spot let go of her, and looked through the window at all the faces looking right back at them with grins on their faces.
>
"Youse roight. Let's go fer a walk."
>
They walked off leaving the restaurant. Walking around Manhattan, Tillie and Spot spent most of the day with each other. It wasn't long before the sunset they were in Central Park, and sat on a bench to rest. Spot put his arm around her as laid her head on his shoulder.
>
"So, now what do we do?" she asked.
>
"Whatcha mean?"
>
"Like Ise said, what do we do now? Wese both leave in two different areas."
>
He gazed at her with the goofy expression on his face.

>
"Didja know ya accent keeps gonin' in and out?"
>
"It does. Dang! I've been hangin' 'round youse newsies too much."
>
"Remembah, ya are a newsie."
>
"O yeah. That's roight. So, like Ise was sayin' before, what do we do now?"
>
"I think wese doin' poitty good roight now. I come 'bout once a

week. Youse can come over ta Brooklyn as much as ya want. But, now dat youse me goirl, its gonna be harder fer me ta stay way."

>
"Its gonna be harder fer me ta wait. But it's worth the wait to see youse. This is just so new to me. I nevah been somebody's girl before. Just me dad's little girl."

>
"I'll make dis da most enjoyable experience ya evah had."

>
"Gee, thanks a lot."

>
"Jist tryin' ta help."

>
They watched the sunset till it was almost dark.

>
"I 'ave a get back to Brooklyn" Spot said letting go of Tillie, and standing up. Tillie stood up right after him.

>
"Yeah. I bettah get back to the lodging house. Da guys 're probably wondering what's goin' on between us. I hope Luke doesn't find out. But I doubt dat."

>
"If he gives ya a hard time, I'll soak 'em."

>
"I'll help ya fer fun."

>
Spot smiled at the remark that Tillie had just made he had said it the night before. He pulled her close, and kissed her for the first time. Tillie was absolutely shocked but realized she liked it. After a long, hard kiss, they pulled away from each other. Tillie peered joyously in his crystal eyes.

>
"See ya soon, Tillie."

>
"I'll be waitin' in the glorious unknown till den."

>
"Youse do dat. Ya know I love ya."

>
"I know."

>
With that, Spot turned and walked away from her. Like always, she stood there watching him until he disappeared from her sight. She know her life was good again. It made her feel like she had a reason to live again. She finally knew where she belonged.

>

End
file.